

As a parent of two scholars and member of the Board of Trustees at Frederick Classical Charter School, I thank you Senator McCray for introducing SB0892 School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment.

This bill is essential to pass. Maryland public charter schools are an integral part of the public-school portfolio in Maryland, serving more than 24,000 students statewide. The critical funding provided through SB0892 will directly benefit public charter school students and teachers who have so far never been provided equitable funding in Maryland. It will also be a benefit to school districts and an investment in the communities where charter schools operate.

LEAs are able to utilize capital funding and general funds from other sources, not available to public charter schools, to support their facilities, operations, and maintenance. SB0892 seeks to establish a fund managed by the IAC that allows public charter schools to apply for reimbursement up to \$2000 per pupil annually for actual eligible facilities-related expenses. It also provides a mechanism for federal funding to flow to Maryland, which cannot occur without the establishment of this fund. This commensurate investment in education does not impact the Blueprint formula nor take funding away from any other public-school students, as the funding would come from the State's General Fund. Instead, SB0892 will allow more Blueprint operating dollars to be spent IN the classroom on learning instead of ON the school's facility. It also sets strong parameters around spending accountability and transparency while ensuring there is standard bond bill language on repayment if a school should close or sell a privately-owned building.

Charter school students are public school students, and they deserve to be educated in safe, welcoming, adequate school buildings just like their traditional public-school peers. Just because a family decides to send their children to a public charter school and stay in the public school system, why do they have to attend, on average, an older, more in need of repair, discarded building? Why do charter schoolteachers have to teach in buildings that do not have adequate space, amenities, or support? Why do charter school operators have to pull funding out of their Blueprint operating dollars (around 17-20%) to pay for their buildings, while traditional schools and LEAs pull from capital funding and general funds? Bottom line, it isn't equitable. Through your support, we can work to balance the inequities that public charter school students, families, and teachers experience in their school buildings every day.

Public charter schools have demonstrated proven results in Maryland for the past 20 years - they are required to maintain above average performance standards for student outcomes. It is about time we get to work funding these public-school facilities so that operating dollars can be spent where they were intended - on teachers, curriculum, and programming for students. I look forward to the Budget & Tax hearing on February 21st and your support of SB0892, School Construction - Public Charter School Facility Fund - Establishment. Please know that it is not only my family, but the larger charter school community across the state - more than 24,000 students, 53 schools in eight districts - in need of your help here again to make Maryland schools world-class.

Thank you,  
Cortney Krauss  
City of Frederick/Frederick County